

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:LRMURRAY:PAW

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 065658

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HEDDA'S CALL ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY
ATHERTON, MARCH 16

1. AMBASSADOR HEDDA CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON
ON MARCH 16, IN ORDER TO REVIEW ISSUES OF COMMON CONCERN
BEFORE AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE FOR TUNIS APRIL 17 FOR
CONSULTATIONS AND TO ASSIST IN ARRANGEMENTS VICE PRESIDENT'S
VISIT. AMBASSADOR MULCAHY AND MR. MURRAY ATTENDED.

2. AMBASSADOR MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

3. GOT HONORED AND QUOTE TOUCHED UNQUOTE WITH VISIT VICE
PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER TO TUNIS TO REPRESENT PRESIDENT AND
AMERICAN PEOPLE AT TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.
TUNISIA VIEWS VISIT AS INDEX OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN TWO
COUNTRIES. ANOTHER INDICATION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP IS
JOINT COMMISSION, WHICH HAS RECENTLY HELD WORKING GROUP
MEETINGS IN BOTH CAPITALS. SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE,
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AND GOT HOPES THAT AT NEXT FULL MEETING IN WASHINGTON

LATER THIS YEAR QUOTE IMPORTANT DECISIONS WHICH ARE
REQUIRED CAN BE TAKEN UNQUOTE.

4. AMBASSADOR REFERRED TO ATHERTON'S RECENT VISIT TO TUNIS,
NOTING THAT THIS ALSO ANOTHER MEASURE OF CLOSE RELATIONS
EXISTING BETWEEN U.S. AND TUNISIA. HEDDA SAID THAT ALL
IMPORTANT REGIONAL ISSUES HAD BEEN COVERED IN ATHERTON'S
MEETING WITH CHATTI AND NOUIRA, AND THAT HE HAD LITTLE TO
ADD OTHER THAN THAT RELATIONS HAD FURTHER DETERIORATED
WITH LIBYA, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY LIBYA'S EXPULSION OF
HUNDREDS OF TUNISIAN (AND EGYPTIAN) RESIDENTS. GOT MAKING
SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO CARE FOR EXPELLEES, BUT EXPULSION
INDICATED FOLLY THROUGH WHICH LIBYA NOW PASSING. HEDDA
COMMENTED SOMETHING SERIOUS IS HAPPENING IN LIBYA, BUT
TUNIS AS YET HAS NOT DRAWN CONCLUSIONS.

5. HEDDA REPEATED GOT VIEWS THAT ITS BEST DEFENSE IS IN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUT THAT A MINIMUM OF DEFENSE
EFFORT ON GOT PART IS REQUIRED, AS A CONTRIBUTION TO AREA
STABILITY IN WHICH USG AND GOT SHARE COMMON INTERESTS.

6. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT GOT APPRECIATES U.S.HELP AS SEEN
IN CURRENT LEVEL OF FMS CREDITS AT 15 MILLION DOLLARS, AND
AS PROJECTED ANNUALLY FOR NEXT FIVE YEARS. GOT ALSO
APPRECIATES USG WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER SALE OF HAWK OR
CHAPARRAL. HAWK HOWEVER IS TOO EXPENSIVE, AND CHAPARRAL
FAILS TO MEET AIR DEFENSE NEEDS BECAUSE OF RANGE
LIMITATIONS, AND IS TOO EXPENSIVE AS WELL. GOT GRATEFUL
FOR OFFER OF F-5 AIRCRAFT, BUT TUNISIA NEITHER ABLE TO
AFFORD OR MAINTAIN SUCH SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT.

7. AMBASSADOR INQUIRED WHETHER USG COULD NOT PROPOSE LESS
EXPENSIVE AND LESS SOPHISTICATED ALTERNATIVES, SUCH AS
REDEYE OR HAMLET MISSILE. HE PREFACED INQUIRY SAYING HE
HAD NO SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO ASK FOR EITHER, BUT SUCH
WEAPONS SYSTEMS SEEMED TO COME CLOSER TO MEETING GOT
DEFENSE NEEDS AND POCKETBOOK. HEDDA EMPHASIZED GOT LOOKING
TO USG FOR HELP IN CONTRIBUTING TO NORTH AFRICAN STABILITY.

8. ATHERTON RESPONDED THAT USG FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT OF
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TUNISIA CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED BY MR. ROCKEFELLER'S VISIT
AND CLOSE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS OVER PAST YEAR. USG
UNDERSTANDS GOT CONCERNS, AND ALSO UNDERSTANDS DIFFICULTIES
GOT FINDS WITH HAWK, CHAPARRAL OR F-5 ALTERNATIVES. HE
EMPHASIZED HOWEVER, THAT MODERN AIR DEFENSE IS EXPENSIVE,
AND THAT USG NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE SUCH TO GOT ON GRANT
BASIS, NOR IS THERE MUCH LIKELIHOOD FOR SIGNIFICANT
INCREASES IN FMS CREDITS TO FINANCE GREATER COMMERCIAL

SALES.

9. AS TO REDEYE AND SIMILAR WEAPONS, ATHERTON EXPLAINED
STANDING USG POLICY TO LIMIT DISPERSION OF WEAPON BECAUSE

OF ITS PORTABILITY AND POSSIBILITIES, UNLIKELY
AS THEY ARE IN TUNISIA'S CASE, THAT THEY COULD FALL INTO
HANDS OF TERRORISTS AND BE USED AGAINST COMMERCIAL AIR-
CRAFT. ATHERTON NOTED THAT USG HAS TURNED DOWN REQUESTS
FOR REDEYE FROM MOROCCO AND OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, AND
THAT FURTHERMORE REDEYE NO LONGER IN PRODUCTION AND US
STOCKS CURRENTLY DEPLETED. FOLLOW-ON STINGER MISSILE
NOT YET BEING PRODUCED, AND USG REQUIREMENTS FOR WEAPON
WILL BE HEAVY WHEN PRODUCTIONS IS STARTED. IN ADDITION,
ATHERTON STRESSED REDEYE AND SIMILAR SYSTEMS ARE TACTICAL
WEAPONS DESIGNED FOR BATTLEFIELD USE, AND THAT THEY DO
NOT PROVIDE AIR DEFENSE FOR FIXED INSTALLATIONS, WHICH
SEEMS TO BE GOT'S MAIN CONCERN AS WE UNDERSTAND IT.

10. ATHERTON AGREED TO REVIEW AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST THAT
FURTHER THOUGHT BE GIVEN TO HOW USG COULD ASSIST TUNISIA,
AND TO RESPOND UPON AMBASSADOR'S RETURN TO WASHINGTON.

11. ATHERTON UNDERLINED HE WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT USG
COULD OFFER MUCH MORE THAN HAD BEEN EARLIER PROPOSED,
AND POINTED OUT UNLIKELIHOOD CREDITS COULD BE INCREASED
SIGNIFICANTLY OVER PRESENT LEVELS IN ORDER TO SOLVE GOT
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS IN MEETING ITS RECOGNIZED DEFENSE
NEEDS. HE URGED THAT GOT LOOK TO OTHER SOURCES FOR
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING FRIENDLY ARAB GOVERNMENTS.

12. ATHERTON ALSO REFERRED BRIEFLY TO SAHARA CONFLICT,
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SAYING THAT HIS VISITS TO RABAT AND ALGIERS DID NOT
PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT THAT DISPUTE COULD BE EASILY OR
QUICKLY SETTLED. POSITIONS HAVE HARDENED SINCE HIS VISIT
IN VIEW ALGERIAN RECOGNITION OF SAHARAN PROVISIONAL GOVERN-
MENT AND MOROCCAN VIEW THAT CONSULTATION WITH SAHARAN
PEOPLE HAS TAKEN PLACE THROUGH JEMAA APPROVAL OF MOROCCAN-
MAURITANIAN DIVISION OF EX-SPANISH COLONY.

13. HEDDA INFORMED US HE ALSO SPOKE WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE CLEMENTS AND NSC CHIEF SCOWCROFT ON MARCH 15,
WHERE HE SAYS HE PRESENTED GENERAL THEME REPEATED IN HIS
CONVERSATION WITH ATHERTON. KISSINGER

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